

Participating in the Life of God:
Exploring the Trinitarian Foundation
of 1 Peter's Missional Identity

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Dedication

This essay is dedicated to Dr. Alan Tomlinson, whose infectious love for the Scriptures inspired and compelled me to seek my place within the world of biblical studies. Dr. Tomlinson taught me that one of the ways that we love the Scriptures is by working hard to read texts in their context—both their literary as well as their socio-historical context. He modeled for me a humble and faithful critical engagement with the best of biblical scholarship (and not just those with whom he agreed); he demonstrated courage when he did not always accept the consensus readings of texts; and he illustrated how to argue your case from the evidence of the text within its own context. His fingerprints are all over my work, not least the conviction that the *telos* of biblical studies is communion with God and faithful participation with Him and His people for the life of the world.

Introduction

For most of the twentieth century 1 Peter was acutely neglected in the field of biblical studies, which also led to its neglect in the pulpit and in the hearts and minds, and the hands and feet of the church; fortunately this is no longer the case. In the past twenty years or so, scholars and practitioners alike increasingly have recognized that 1 Peter is a fruitful and formative text for better understanding the mission to which God's people have been called to participate, especially in places where the

church finds itself trying to live out its vocation in a post-Christian or even anti-Christian context.¹

The growing body of research that has emerged regarding the missional identity of the people of God in 1 Peter has tended to focus on at least one of three themes: (a) the place of suffering and social alienation for those who are faithfully engaged in God's mission for the world; (b) the function of the Old Testament, or one might even say, Israel's missional identity, for elucidating the identity and mission of the church; and/or (c) the way in which Christology undergirds and informs the church's disposition and practice of its calling, especially in contexts in which Christian assumptions about the world are not embraced or considered normative.²

These lines of inquiry have been tremendously helpful in encouraging us to read 1 Peter "missionally". That is to say, recent research on 1 Peter has illuminated the missional direction and purposes of the letter, the missional locatedness of the implied readers, and the way in which this mission affects how the church ought to engage with (instead of withdraw from) culture.³ As much as these advances need to

¹ See for example Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); or Stephen Fagbemi, *Who Are the Elect in 1 Peter? A Study in Biblical Exegesis and Its Application to the Anglican Church of Nigeria* (Studies in Biblical Literature, Vol. 104. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007).

² See for example Feldmeier, Reinhard, *Die Christen Als Fremde: Die Metapher Der Fremde in Der Antiken Welt, Im Urchristentum Und Im 1. Petrusbrief* (WUNT. Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); Steven R. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*. (Vol. 162 Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in 1 Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (Studies in Biblical Literature, Vol. 33. New York: Lang, 2002); J. Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter: Paraenetic Strategies for Christian Character Formation* (Vol. 209 WUNT. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Andrew Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter*. London: Continuum, 2007); Kelly Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9-14* (SNTSMS 157, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Patrick Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

³ These four categories of missional hermeneutics are taken from George Hunsburger, "Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation" (*Missiology: An International Review*: Vol 39.3, July, 2011.)

be celebrated (and hopefully incorporated into the contemporary church's witness), in my view there has been inattention to the more foundational claims made in 1 Peter, which ground the mission and the missional identity of the people of God in an economy of shared activities between the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. In other words, I will suggest that recent articulations of the way in which 1 Peter shapes the mission of the church have not been sufficiently Trinitarian.⁴

In this essay, then, I seek to underscore the way in which 1 Peter characterizes (or frames) the mission of the people of God and highlight how that mission is inextricably linked to the life shared between the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit, which is the grounds, the means, and the *telos* of the vocation of the church. Given the limitations of this venue, I will confine the bulk of my observations to the letter prescript (1 Peter 1.1-2), and a sampling of the way in which the themes developed there manifest themselves in a variety of strategic places in the rest of letter.

The Missional Paradigm of the People of God: "Elect-Sojourners"

The prescript (1.1-2) of 1 Peter is by no means an insignificant space-filler that functions merely to notify us of the sender and the intended audience. Rather, as many primopetrine scholars have underscored, in the opening lines of the letter Peter⁵ immediately begins to construct a

⁴ I mean this in two senses. First, recent biblical scholarship has not adequately attended to the way in which Peter links the mission of the people of God to the three-fold economy of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit (Peter's "trinitarianism", if you will). Second, recent reflections on the message of 1 Peter done from within Christian communities that seek to be missional have tended to sideline the church's Trinitarian confession and hermeneutical approach to understanding the Scriptures. Joel Green (1 Peter [The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary], Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.) is a noteworthy exception to this trend.

⁵ Many biblical scholars doubt that 1 Peter could have been written by the fisherman-turned-apostle, Simon Peter. For more on the authorship of 1 Peter see Liebengood 2014:18-20 and Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 14-19. In this essay I will refer to the author as Peter, as he has identified himself at the beginning of the letter.

paradigm that informs the implied readers regarding how they might rightly conceptualize their calling and how it is to be lived out in the midst of their precarious situation of suffering and social alienation.⁶ This paradigm is formed with what is initially an ambiguous epithet, ἐκλεκτοί παρεπίδημοι (**see table 1**).⁷ Unfortunately, English translations can conceal this strategic rhetorical move by obscuring not only the missional function of the epithet used to describe the readers, but also the way in which the activities of the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ are grounds and the means for that missional calling.

Table 1: 1 Peter 1.1b-2a in Greek

Nestle-Aland 28

ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπίδημοις...

κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς

ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος

εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

In what follows then, I will address the manner in which the epithet functions as a paradigm for the mission of the people of God. Then I will show how Peter grounds this paradigmatic epithet in the shared mission of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit.

⁶ For a helpful survey of the precarious situation of the recipients of 1 Peter see David Horrell, *1 Peter* (New Testament Guides, London: T&T Clark, 2008), 45-59.

⁷ Achtemeier (*1 Peter* [Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 80.) for example, says that ‘the opening two verses set the stage for what is to follow in the letter in terms of content and themes’; see also P. L. Tite, *Compositional Transitions in 1 Peter: An Analysis of the Letter-Opening* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1997); J.R. Michaels, *1 Peter*, (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 49. Waco: Word, 1988), 4, 13; Leonard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64. For more on why I do not regard διασπορά as the controlling metaphor of the letter see Liebengood 2014:156-164.

As can be seen in **Table 2**, English translations tend to refer to the recipients as ‘exiles’. This rendering of the Greek word *παρεπίδημοι* has the potential of misleading the reader, however, in part because the English word ‘exile’, as it is used in the Scriptures, carries connotations of wrong-doing and punishment, suggesting perhaps that the readers are in a precarious situation because of some sort of unfaithfulness or rebellion against God—which is precisely the sentiment that Peter is trying to combat! But perhaps more importantly, as I will soon show, to render *παρεπίδημοι* as ‘exiles’, fails to capture the essential point of the metaphor, which is to remind the readers that although they have been redeemed, their (re)new(ed) vocation to be a holy priesthood that shares in and mediates the life of God is to be exercised in a context of liminality; that is, their primary focus is faithfulness to their vocation in the wilderness as they journey towards their inheritance.

Table 2: *English Translations of 1 Peter 1.1b-2a*

NRSV	NIV	ESV
To the <u>exiles</u> ...who have been <u>chosen</u> and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit <u>to be</u> obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood:	To God’s <u>elect, exiles</u> ...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, <u>to be</u> obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:	To those who are <u>elect exiles</u> ...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, <u>for</u> obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

Additionally, in the original Greek, the word used to describe the readers, *παρεπίδημος*, is coupled and modified with the term *ἐκλεκτός*, which is most often translated as *elect* or *chosen*. These two descriptors of the readers, *ἐκλεκτοί* and *παρεπίδημοι*, are meant to be read together, to mutually inform one another, and to establish the paradigm by which the

readers are to understand not only their identity and vocation but also their suffering and social alienation. But some English translations conceal this rhetorical strategy, as can be seen in **Table 2**. The NRSV, for example, separates the two words into distinct phrases, and the NIV breaks them up with a comma. In so doing, some English translations obfuscate the way in which the two words work together to form an epithet that encapsulates the way in which Peter orients his readers: they are “elect-sojourners”.

In what follows, I will put forth a reading of 1 Peter that suggests that the initially (and perhaps even strategically) ambiguous epithet, ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι, is best understood in the context of a particular theme that Peter develops throughout the letter, especially in the *exordium* (1.3-12) and the first *argumentatio* (1.13-2.10).⁸ That is to say that Peter fills out the meaning of the initially ambiguous epithet for us as we attune ourselves to the implicit narrative that follows in his letter.⁹

For example, in the *exordium*, Peter explains that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has radical implications for how his readers are to conceptualize their lives of suffering and shame. These implications are described in terms that echo the first exodus and wilderness journey of Israel. Like the Israelites after they were ransomed from Egypt, followers of Jesus are now a newly-formed people (1:3, 23; cf. 2:10; Exod 19.1-6; Isa 43.21; Hos 2.23), who find themselves in a new wilderness experience, journeying towards a new, incorruptible inheritance (1:4).¹⁰ As did the fathers, this newly-formed people can

⁸ In Liebengood 2014:130-140; 156-164 I argue that most research on παρεπίδημος focuses on discerning the range of meaning from other ancient sources. As helpful as these studies are, I suggest that the context of the letter, and in particular the implicit narrative of 1 Peter, actually develops and establishes the meaning for us.

⁹ For a detailed account of the implicit narrative of 1 Peter see Liebengood 2014:175-214.

¹⁰ Goppelt (*Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], pg. 152) notes that “Peter views the church as being on the march, like Israel in the wilderness”. For κληρονομία as a circumlocution for arriving and possessing the promised land see Num 34.2; 36.2; Deut 12.9; Josh 1.15; 13.1; Jdgs 2.6; 18.1; 21.23; 2 Chron 6.27; 31.1; Ps 134.12; 135.21,22; Jer 2.7; 3.19; 16.18; Ezek 11.15; 25.4, 10; for the use of

expect to encounter a variety of trials (πειρασμοί) along the way (1:5-7), in which their allegiance to God will be tested. These “fiery” trials will be met with God’s sustaining power and faithfulness (1:5-7). All of this, according to Peter, is in keeping with the prophets, who bore witness beforehand not only to the glory which is to come, but also to the present sufferings which must be endured until the Christ’s return (1.10-12).¹¹

This second exodus narrative which has been alluded to in 1 Peter 1.3-12 is more fully developed in the letter’s first *argumentatio* (1.13-2.10). Drawing on Passover language, Peter exhorts his readers to ‘gird up the loins’ of their mind (cf. Exod 12.11), and to conduct themselves with fear during the time of their wilderness sojourning (1.17), since they have been redeemed with the precious blood of the lamb who was without defect or blemish, Jesus (1.19). Within this narrative, Peter draws attention to the admonishment given to the original wilderness sojourners, in which they were urged to “be holy in all you do” (1 Pet 1:15). He follows this exhortation by quoting the often-repeated refrain from Leviticus, a foundational wilderness text, “be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16; Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). Several other significant OT texts are drawn on in this first *argumentatio*, which confirm that Peter understands his readers to be participating in a new exodus/wilderness journey. Their new birth (1.3, 23) is said to be in keeping with the word that was announced in Isa 40.6-8, a passage that many scholars have noted serves as the prologue to Isaiah 40-55 and its program of restoration, regularly described in terms of a second exodus.

κληρονομία in conjunction with the promise of restoration see Isa 49.8; Jer 12.25; Psa 2.8; 67.10; 110.6; Ezek 45.1.

¹¹ It is important to stress that when Peter speaks of journeying to an inheritance he is not setting up an earth-heaven dualism. That is to say, that what makes the implied readers sojourners is not that they live on earth and that their real home is in heaven; salvation in 1 Peter is not an escape from this world. Rather, for Peter the implied readers are sojourners because their values, commitments and shared life together as followers of Jesus do not concord with their neighbors and compeers. For Peter, the eschatological journey concludes when Christ returns to earth (1 Pet 1.5; 5.4) and presumably renews creation, including the social-political order (especially given the way inheritance language is used in the OT [see note 13 above] and Peter’s reliance on OT conceptions of redemption, restoration, and inheritance).

The priesthood imagery of 1 Pet 2.4-10, perhaps counter-intuitively, reiterates and even intensifies this wilderness/second exodus theme that Peter has been developing thus far in the letter. This can be seen in 1 Pet 2:9, where there is a conflation of terms which are derived from Exod 19:5-6 and Isa 43:20-21:

you are a chosen people (Isa 43.20), a royal priesthood (Exod 19:6), a holy nation (Exod 19:6), a people belonging to God (Exod 19:5), that you may declare the praises of him (Isa 43:21) who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

In the literary setting of Exod 19:1-6, YHWH has chosen and gathered his freshly redeemed and newly formed people in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai, and has commissioned them to be a kingdom of priests who have a communal vocation to share in and mediate the life of God to one another and to their neighbors. It appears that Peter's appropriation of Exod 19:5-6, then, is intended to substantiate that, in a manner similar to their fathers in Egypt, they have been redeemed from their slavery, their futile way of life (1 Pet 1.19), and to evoke in his readers the call of recapitulating the wilderness journey of their fathers, this time in faithfulness, as they communally bear witness to the mighty acts of God.

This recapitulating call is confirmed by the appropriation of Isaiah 43 in 1 Peter 2.9, where Peter draws his readers' attention, not to the first exodus, but rather to the promise of a second exodus as is developed in Isaiah 40-55. It is within this section of Isaiah that YHWH speaks of a new day to come, one in which He will ransom His exiled people, renew His covenant with them, and make a way in the desert for them to journey to their inheritance (cf. 1 Pet 1.3-4). That Peter envisions his readers as already redeemed (from exile) is further confirmed by his allusion to Isa 43.21 and 42.12 in the latter part of 1 Pet 2.9 ("in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light"). In its original literary context, this text charges YHWH's people to proclaim his saving

wonders once they have been redeemed from Babylonian exile.¹² This appropriation of Isa 43:20-21 suggests that Peter understands this promised second exodus to have been actualized in Jesus, who as we learn later in 1 Peter 2.23-25, has redeemed (healed) and gathered his scattered, straying sheep through his sacrificial death.

The first *argumentatio* concludes in 1 Pet 2.10 with an allusion drawn from Hosea 2.23. This refrain from Hosea is the climax of a prophetic oracle in which YHWH declares that he will deliver Israel in spite of her idolatry and radical infidelity, alluring her to the wilderness where “she will respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt” (Hos 2.15). According to Hosea 2, it is in the desert, having been redeemed from Babylonian exile, where YHWH will proclaim that those who once were not a people, are now a people of God; those who once had not received mercy, have now received mercy’. Peter seems to be suggesting that this prophetic oracle is realized now through Jesus and appropriated by those who follow him.

This brief survey of 1 Peter 1:1-2:10 fills out the picture that Peter wishes to paint when he opens his letter with the epithet ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι. The term ἐκλεκτός reminds his readers that they have been chosen to be a kingdom of priests who orient their lives around the propagation of God’s will and who mediate the life of their God to one another and to their neighbors.¹³ That they are elect παρεπίδημοι, highlights that for now their vocation is to be expressed in a kind of the wilderness liminality (the eschatological “now-but-not yet” of the kingdom of God), where, like their wilderness fathers, they will be tested until they reach their inheritance (1 Pet 1.5-7; 2.11-12; 4.12-17).¹⁴

¹² It is illuminating that in the LXX of Isaiah 42-43, the ἄρეტας (mighty acts) refer specifically to God’s saving acts in the first exodus, and his future saving acts in the exodus to come.

¹³ ‘1 Pet. is the only NT work in which *eklektos* has from the very outset thematic significance. Here everything is worked out in terms of this controlling concept’ (Schrenk 1967:190, taken from John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [Anchor Bible, Vol 37b; New York: Doubleday, 2000]), pg. 446.

¹⁴ Tim Laniak develops a similar line of thought (*Shepherds after My Own Heart* [Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 20; Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006]), pgs. 225-229): Peter encourages these churches as ‘aliens and sojourners’,

The Foundational Claims of the Letter Prescript (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Having said all this, it is important to underscore that there is a more foundational claim being made in the prescript of 1 Peter; namely, that the ground and means for the vocation of these ‘elect-sojourners’ is the related activities of the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ.

As can be seen in **Table 1**, Peter amplifies the pregnant epithet ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι with three prepositional phrases. First, he underscores that their status as ‘elect-sojourners’ is in keeping with the foreknowledge of God the Father (κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρός). Given the proliferation of OT prophetic texts appropriated in 1 Peter, not to mention Peter’s own words in 1 Pet 1.10-12, the point of this prepositional phrase is to highlight that the Father has predetermined the salvation and renewal of His people, as previously has been revealed in the Scriptures.¹⁵ In other words, this unique status and vocation that they have been given and which they must now live out is in keeping with what the Father planned and which he revealed to the prophets (cf. 1 Pet 1.10-12).

Second, Peter credits the work of the Spirit (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος) with providing the means by which the ‘elect-sojourners’ are empowered to live out their calling.¹⁶ As we have already seen ‘holiness’ is a foundational injunction to the would-be faithful elect-sojourners (1.15-16). The prescript reminds us, then, that this injunction to be holy is enabled by the Spirit, who himself is characterized by holiness (1.12), and who in turn makes holy those who share in the life of God.¹⁷

We find this theme of holiness and its dependence on the enabling of the Spirit illuminated in the midst of another key paradigm-forming passage, namely 1 Pet 2.4-10. In 1 Pet 2.5, the people of God are described as a ‘spiritual house’ that is ‘being built’ for the purpose of being a ‘holy’ priesthood that offers ‘spiritual’ sacrifices that are pleasing

understanding their identity as God’s renewed covenant community, freshly formed in a new wilderness of testing, and anticipating glory in their future home’ (2006:225).

¹⁵ See also Green 2007:19.

¹⁶ To be clear, ἐν expresses instrumentality or means, and πνεύματος is a subjective genitive and refers to the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ See Green (2007:215), who underscores the importance of ‘being made holy’ in the letter and that “Peter makes it clear that the agent of sanctification is the Spirit”.

to God through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ It seems clear from the context that the term ‘house’ in 1 Peter 2 is polyvalent: it is both an architectural term that points to the temple, but it also connotes the notion of a royal dynasty, a kingly priesthood, as is indicated in 2.5 and 2.9.¹⁹ It is important to note that this house is ‘being built’ (passive voice). That is to say, there is an external agent who is making the house into a ‘holy priesthood’. This agent is indicated by the qualifying term ‘spiritual’, which is not a circumlocution to indicate that the ‘house’ is immaterial, but rather is Peter’s way of crediting the building and transforming of the people of God to the sanctifying work of the Spirit.²⁰ Just as Jesus’ life and obedience are characterized as a sacrificial offering in 1.2 and elsewhere (1 Pet 1.19; 2.24; 3.18), so also the spiritual house is being equipped to offer their lives as a “spiritual” sacrifice to God—that is to say, the Spirit empowers them to live the totality of their lives in a manner that pleases God. It should be noted that in this one verse (1 Pet 2.5), we find these three distinct individuals working in unity of purpose, and presented as the ground, means and the end of what the “house” is up to: the Spirit empowers the people of God to offer their lives as pleasing sacrifices, which are offered to God (the Father), ‘through Jesus Christ’, whose sacrificial death enables union with the life of God and models a life which is pleasing to God.²¹

The final manner in which Peter amplifies the epithet *ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι* (elect-sojourners) can also be obscured by English translations. As you can see in **Table 2**, the English versions make ‘obedience to Jesus’ the *telos* of the activities of the Father and the Spirit. While this is a possible rendition of the Greek, it fails to follow a pattern that Peter seems carefully to have arranged in the prescript, and it does not run with the grain of what is developed in the rest of the letter.

Regarding the pattern that Peter has arranged, in the two previous prepositional phrases the genitives are clearly subjective, which

¹⁸ Elliott (2000:418) argues that ‘spiritual house’ “constitutes the root metaphor for Christian community in 1 Peter, the fundamental concept that identifies the collective identity of the Christians, their relation to God and to one another, and the basis of their behavior as a family or brotherhood”.

¹⁹ For more on the polyvalence of ‘house of God’ language in 1 Peter, see Liebengood 2014:145-153; 164-170

²⁰ Cf. Elliott 2000:418.

²¹ This claim will be developed further in the next section of this essay.

is to say that the Father and the Spirit are the subjects doing the activities described in the head nouns (predetermining and sanctifying). Given this pattern, it seems most natural to at least give consideration to the option of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive. Such a reading would alleviate the unnecessary, awkward, and confusing fragmentation of ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος.²² What has perhaps discouraged some English translators from keeping with the subjective-genitive pattern is the preposition εἰς, which is frequently used to indicate purpose or goal (“for”), thus making the subjective genitive impossible. Some, however, have argued for a causal meaning of εἰς (*because*), which enables a subjective-genitive reading of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ such that Jesus Christ is doing the obeying and sprinkling of blood.²³ The Common English Bible translation of 1 Peter 1.2 reflects this exegetical judgment: “To God’s chosen strangers....*because* of the faithful obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ”. As attractive as this reading might be, there seems to be no lexical support for the claim that εἰς can have causal force.²⁴

There is lexical support, however, for the usage of εἰς to communicate instrumentality (*by means of*).²⁵ With this reading, the third prepositional clause explains that the ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι are made so by means of Jesus’ obedience. Furthermore, it characterizes his obedience in a particular way—not as a tragic side-effect of speaking truth to the Roman Empire, but rather as an intentional sacrificial

²² See for example the NRSV: “to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood”; or the ESV: “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood”.

²³ E.g. Liebengood 2014:160–61; Elliott 2000:319; Green 2007:20.

²⁴ See Sydney Page, “Obedience and Blood-Sprinkling in 1 Peter 1:2” (*Westminster Theological Journal* 72), 294–295. While I agree with his argument regarding the causal εἰς, I think his overall argumentation against a subjective genitive reading of 1 Pet 1.2 is unconvincing.

²⁵ See Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). ; Louw-Nida (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (2nd edition), [New York: United Bible Societies, 1996]) acknowledge εἰς, ἐν, and διὰ as “markers of the means by which one event makes another event possible”. E.g. Acts 7.53.

offering.²⁶ In sum, if we regard the third preposition phrase to be communicating instrumentality, then Peter is claiming that his readers are enabled to live out their calling as *ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι* by means of the faithfulness and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

This reading of the final prepositional phrase in 1 Peter 1.2 runs with the grain of rest of the letter. Jesus' life—the way in which He endured suffering and social alienation, the manner in which he entrusted Himself to the Father—was not only the *means* by which elect-sojourners are brought into God's house, but is also instrumental in that he serves as the *model* that these new-born children are now called to follow.

In various places we see that Jesus' death is characterized in terms of a sacrifice that brings people to God. In 1 Peter 1.19, as we have already discussed, Jesus' death is portrayed in terms of the Passover lamb that ransoms people for God; in 1 Pet 2.4-5 we see that the people of God are made a holy priesthood 'through Jesus Christ'; in 1 Peter 2.24, Jesus death is described as a substitutionary offering that enables us to live to righteousness; and in 1 Peter 3.18, Peter claims that Christ suffered once for sins in order to bring us to God.

But according to Peter, Jesus did not merely live in order to die as an atonement for sin; rather, his life of obedience serves as paradigm for faithfulness. So for example, in 1 Peter 2.21, Peter asserts that his implied readers are called to follow in the footsteps of the suffering and vindicated Jesus, who left them an example to emulate. In 1 Peter 2.23, the example that Jesus leaves to be followed is one of non-violent resistance to injustice and wrong-doing: in the face of revilement and threats, rather than respond in kind, Jesus "continued to entrust himself to the one who judges justly". Thus, Jesus becomes an example of faithful

²⁶ There may be more going on here. Most scholars see some kind of allusion to Exod. 24.3-8 in the phraseology "obedience and sprinkling of blood", but there are a variety of proposals for how to construe the way Peter is appropriating this reference. In light of the themes that I have developed in this essay, it seems likely that Peter is alluding to the "obedience and sprinkling of blood" in Exodus 24 in order to show that Jesus, the new Moses of the second exodus, mediates the renewal of God's covenant by means of His obedience and sacrificial death. Thus, the allusion does not point to the implied readers' self-commitment of obedience, but rather to Jesus, whose life and death make the mission of God's people possible.

obedience to the Father. In 1 Pet 3.9, Peter draws a line to the paradigmatic faithfulness of Jesus (cf. 1 Pet 2.23) by exhorting his readers to “not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling”. Additionally, in 1 Peter 4.19, he draws on Jesus’ response to wrong doing by exhorting followers of Jesus to ‘entrust’ their souls (as Jesus did) to a faithful Creator while doing good. And in 1 Pet 4.1-2, Peter urges his readers to arm themselves with the same disposition that Jesus had—living no longer for the passions of the flesh but rather for the will of God.

Here I underscore two significant points in relation to this brief survey of Jesus’ life in 1 Peter. First, apart from the disputed passage in 1.2, in 1 Peter Jesus is never presented as the object of obedience; rather He is held up as the paradigm of faithful obedience to the Father.²⁷ This should have some bearing on the way in which we interpret the last of the three prepositional phrases in 1 Pet 1.2. Second, Jesus is presented as the model of the kind of holiness that the readers are encouraged to pursue. That is to say, as the Spirit empowers the people of God to be a *holy* priesthood, he empowers the people to be more like Jesus, to conform them to the pattern that Jesus left for them to follow—a life in which they too are a sacrificial offering that mediates the life of God to the world (1 Pet 2.5). Thus, for Peter, holiness is cruciform. The injunction, ‘be holy as God is holy’ (1.16), then is a call to pattern one’s life after the faithfulness embodied by Jesus Christ.

The Mission of the People of God in 1 Peter – Participating in the Life of God

When we read the prescript (1 Pet 1.1-2) in the manner in which I am suggesting, it enables us to see an economy at work throughout the letter that grounds and empowers the mission of the church. Salvation and concomitant vocation are integrally, inseparably connected to the life and activities of the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ. Said in another way, the life and love of God are mediated through the interplay between the architect, the one who sanctifies, and the one who models faithfulness as He offers Himself in love. The Father predetermines

²⁷ This should not be construed as me suggesting that we need not obey Jesus; rather I am merely highlighting the pattern in 1 Peter and showing how it coheres with my reading of the third prepositional clause in 1 Pet 1.2.

salvation and mission as a gift for His people and for the life of the world. Before the foundation of the world the Father sends Jesus, the Lamb, who mediates the life of God by offering himself as an atonement for this sins of his people; in executing His mission, Jesus also becomes the model for the mission of the people of God, embodying what it looks like to mediate the life of God to others; and the Holy Spirit, who empowered the prophets to announce the coming of the Christ also actualizes the accomplishments of Jesus by equipping the people of God to live in holiness as they learn to conform to the obedience and faithfulness of the Christ.

First Peter, then, exerts pressure on us to think about knowing God as participating in the life and mission shared between the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In particular, in 1 Peter the experience of knowing God is characterized as being caught up in Jesus' love and obedience to the Father, as enabled by the Spirit, for the sake of the world. In this sense, knowing God is less like facing a solitary being in worship and more like joining a drama already in progress.²⁸ When we come onto the scene, the Father has already sent Jesus (1 Pet 1.20), who has already willingly suffered on account of his faithful obedience for the sake of our redemption (1 Pet 2.23-24); the Father has raised him from the dead, vindicating his suffering; the Spirit (of Christ) has already anticipated the coming of the Christ and has equipped the prophets to announce such a day (1.10-11). Now, by the Spirit, we come to receive the suffering and vindication of Jesus as good news about God (1 Pet 1.12); through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the Father now gives us a living hope and an incorruptible inheritance that enables us to endure hardships (1.3-4, 21); and by means of the Spirit we now learn to live a life of holiness (1 Pet 1.2), which is patterned after the life of the suffering and vindicated Jesus (1 Pet 2.21), all so that we can mediate the life of God to others (often by means of suffering) and continue to bear witness to the mighty acts of the one who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light (1 Pet 2.9). This is the "grace that was to be ours" (1 Pet 1.10-12): the full participation of God in our salvation so that we can participate in the fullness of God, now revealed

²⁸ Mike Higton, *Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 93. Green 2007:208 "the God who is known on account of his revelatory activity...is the God disclosed in the divine drama as 'persons' and not only 'person'".

and experienced by the way in which we relate to the Father through Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit.

But perhaps more can be said about this economy of salvation that we find in this letter. There are two intriguing exegetical moves that Peter makes in chapter two which suggest that Jesus in some way shares in the divine identity.²⁹ In 1 Pet 2.3-4, Peter identifies Jesus as the “Lord” referred to in Psalm 34.8. This suggests that Jesus shares the divine name.³⁰ And in 1 Pet 2.25, Jesus is described as the Shepherd and Overseer of the implied readers’ souls—an identity and function that is attributed to the one true God of Israel, and celebrated in such places as Ezekiel 34 and Psalm 23. What is more, in this letter we also learn that the Spirit “must be understood intimately in relation to the Father and Christ”.³¹ The Spirit “of Christ” bears witness to the prophets who would announce his (Christ’s) coming (1.11); the Spirit is “sent from heaven” to enable the implied readers to receive the news of Jesus’ suffering and vindication as good news; and the Spirit “of God” mediates God’s favor as he rests on and blesses those who endure hardship because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ (4.14). This sampling is significant because it seems to suggest that for Peter, the Father, Jesus Christ and the Spirit not only share in a unity of will or purpose, but also that they somehow share in the same divine identity.

Conclusion

One important outcome of this reflection on 1 Peter is that we are reminded of the foundation of our missional identity and the theological impetus for the very notion of a *missio Dei* (mission of God), namely the doctrine of the Trinity.

As Bosch tells the story, in the middle of the twentieth century there was a decisive shift in understanding and articulating the mission of the church. Previously, the church’s mission was understood in relation to soteriology (getting people saved from eternal punishment),

²⁹ For a full account of “divine identity Christology” see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

³⁰ See Phil 2.5-11 for a similar move by Paul.

³¹ Green 2007:217.

in cultural terms (introducing people to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West), as church growth, or as the development of salvation-history, that is, the process by which the world would be transformed into the kingdom of God.³² Bosch credits Karl Barth with rearticulating the mission of the church as an activity of God himself. And he suggests that Barth's *Trinitarian* insight led to the development of the concept of *missio Dei*: the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and the Father, Son, and Spirit send the church into the world.³³ According to Bosch, it was the doctrine of the Trinity that fostered an understanding of mission as participating in the sending God: "to participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love".³⁴

In this essay, I have tried to show that the mission of the people of God is grounded and enabled by the triune *missio Dei*. I have argued that there is a three-fold economy in 1 Peter that reveals that God—the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—has fully participated in the salvation of His people so that the people of God can in turn fully participate in the life of God and mediate that life to others. I hope to have demonstrated that this Trinitarian grounding in 1 Peter is not an imposition of Nicene dogmatics upon the text, but rather is instigated by a close reading of the letter and the claims that are made therein. But it can also be said that the nicene-chalcedonian formulations regarding the triunity of God no doubt have helped us identify the economy of Father, Son, and Spirit in the letter, which otherwise might have escaped our attention.³⁵ Additionally, I want to make clear that I do not assume that when Peter speaks of the relations and activities of the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit, he does so with the same fullness and nuance that we find in the later ecumenical creeds. Having said that, I have demonstrated that there are hints that Peter has a rather full and nuanced understanding of

³² David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 389.

³³ Bosch 1991:390. Extending Barth's insight, Karl Hartenstein was the first to coin the term *missio Dei* in 1934. But John Flett (*The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth and the Nature of Christian Community* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010]) has argued that he did not root the *missio Dei* in the doctrine of the Trinity as Barth did.

³⁴ Bosch 1991:390.

³⁵ Green 2007:207.

the economy and ontology of God lurking under the surface of the letter that is hospitable with the ecumenical creeds.³⁶ What is more, we might even say that Peter's account of the life of the triune God helps attune us to the missional force of Nicene Trinitarians that otherwise might have escaped our attention.³⁷

As important as it is to talk thoroughly about the missional direction and purposes of the Scriptures, the missional locatedness of the implied readers, and the way in which this mission affects how the church ought to engage with culture, this study in 1 Peter reminds us that being missional is first and foremost about being attentive to God and the life that we share with Him. That is to say that being missional is not merely a set of ideals that we must realize or implement; rather, more foundationally, being missional is a reality in which we are invited to participate—a reality created by God as an extension of the life shared between Father, Son, and Spirit. Being missional is attending to God (His will and His ways of doing things) through the Scriptures, and being attentive to the ways in which the Spirit is conforming us to the holiness of Jesus Christ, in the midst of and for the sake of the communities in which we have been placed, so that “grace and peace may be multiplied” to all (1 Pet 1.2).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ This because Nicene Trinitarians often reduces the discussion to ontology.